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ABSTRACT

This regional needs assessment has three objectives: (1) collect and analyze information with the goal of identifying emerging trends and issues in the Northwest that affect public education; (2) use the findings from this analysis as a basis for assessing perceptions of how significantly these issues impact their local schools; and (3) use these and other needs-assessment findings to guide Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory program development. The needs-assessment process operates on an annual cycle to ensure that results can be applied routinely to planning throughout the institution. Data collection includes surveys of education stakeholders, monitoring of regional news releases, senior staff recommendations, and regional meetings. In review of the findings, the most prominent issue to emerge was professional development. Teachers indicated their willingness to accept new challenges but wanted ongoing assistance to develop their skills. Another emergent theme was that of family and community support for student learning. Educators requested assistance in defining roles and developing strategies to involve families and the community in setting high standards. A final major issue was that of school climate and the need for a safe learning environment for all students. Recommendations for changes in the assessment procedure and three appendices detailing survey responses are included. (RJM)

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NORTHWEST TRENDS SHAPING EDUCATION:

The 1998 Regional Needs Assessment

November 1998

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Northwest Trends Shaping Education:

The 1998 Regional Needs Assessment

November 1998

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INTRODUCTION

To be responsive as well as proactive in providing research and development assistance to schools and other organizations in the region, NWREL annually assesses the educational needs of its region (Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington) and applies this needs information to guide program planning and the selection and development of research and development (R&D) activities. In its needs assessment, NWREL strives to assure both continuity in tracking needs over time and identification of important new needs as they emerge. An established cycle of needs sensing activities uses multiple data sources to collect information from an array of regional constituents.

FY98 Regional Needs Assessment Objective

The 1998 Regional Needs Assessment has three objectives: (1) to collect and analyze information from a variety of sources with the goal of identifying emerging trends and issues in the region that impact public education; (2) to use the findings from this analysis as a basis for surveying the practitioners, as well as the public, on their perceptions of how significantly these trends and issues impact their local schools, and (3) to use these findings, along with findings from other needs assessment activities, to guide NWREL program development.

The Regional Needs Assessment Process

The needs assessment process operates on an annual cycle based on NWREL's fiscal year (September 1 through August 31). This ensures that the needs assessment findings can be applied routinely to planning throughout the institution. The annual needs assessment process includes the following activities each year:

- Review of the needs assessment design by the NWREL Board of Directors Strategic Planning Committee and by the Program Planning Council, made up of NWREL's program directors.
- Data collection and analysis
- Review of findings by the Board Strategic Planning Committee with identification of implications and recommendations for program policy revision and strategic planning
- Review of findings and revised program policy by the Program Planning Council with identification of appropriate programmatic actions along with implications drawn by the representative advisory committees

- Application of the regional needs assessment findings in ongoing planning, development, and evaluation activities throughout the year

This overall process is maintained from year to year. NWREL views its needs assessment activities longitudinally, basing each year's design on the information gathered the prior year so that the work is conducted in a manner that is cost-effective and does not impinge too heavily on the region's educational practitioners and educational assistance partners. This iterative process enables NWREL to trace trends over several years. The specific focus and scope of the annual needs assessment activities follows a two-year cycle. Table 1 identifies the information sources that are analyzed in each phase of this cycle.

Table 1. Regional Needs Assessment Data Sources and Activity Cycle

Information Source	Year I	Year II	Data Collection Schedule
PARS Follow-up Surveys	X	X	Quarterly
LEA Survey of Board Chairs, Superintendents, Principals, and Teachers		X	2nd Quarter of OERI Years 2 and 4
Public Telephone Survey of Households		X	2nd Quarter of OERI Years 2 and 4
Monitoring of Regional News Releases	X		2nd Quarter of OERI Year
NWREL Senior Staff Recommendations	X	X	1st Quarter
Regional Public Forum/School Improvement Organization Meetings		X	1st Quarter of OERI Years 3 and 5
NWREL Board Member Deliberations	X	X	December Meeting

Regional Needs Information Sources And Methods

Professional Activity Reporting System (PARS) client follow-up survey responses. Consumers of NWREL products and services are an important source of information about future needs. Upon completion of a transaction or contractual relationship with clients, NWREL routinely requests client feedback on perceived future needs.

LEA survey of board chairs, superintendents, principles, and teachers. In Year II of the needs assessment cycle, the Local Education Agency (LEA) Survey is sent to all superintendents, a random sample of school principals, a random sample of certified classroom teachers, and each of the school board chairpersons in the public school districts of the five-state region. The survey provides a list of issues relevant to public education and asks respondents to rate the significance of these issues to their work. The issues listed are those identified during Year I of the cycle. The respondents are also asked to identify other issues of importance to practitioners that were not listed in the survey. These issues (referred to as the LEA write-ins) are compiled and analyzed in the following year's needs assessment. This year's Regional Needs Assessment contains this analysis.

Public telephone survey of households. A state-representative sample of 2,000 households is conducted by telephone to query citizen perceptions of the trends affecting education. These findings provide a basis for gauging public opinion concerning opportunities, constraints, and expectations for schools in the region.

Monitoring of regional news releases. A systematic content analysis of major northwest newspapers (Anchorage, Seattle, Portland, Boise, Spokane, and Billings) is conducted to determine the nature of continuing news coverage devoted to education-related issues. These data provide an avenue for reviewing educational issues from the perspective of the lay audience. The changing nature of this news will be used to identify emergent themes, as well as to validate themes identified from other data sources.

NWREL senior staff recommendations. Periodically, NWREL senior staff are asked to share their expertise and perspectives from the field concerning the nature and implications of the critical trends and substantive issues affecting education in the region. Such consultation includes the drafting and review of items for the practitioner and public surveys, nomination of national and regional reports of significance, and the discussion of programmatic and institutional implications of the preliminary needs assessment findings. In July, 1998 program directors deliberated on the emerging educational needs of the region.

Regional public forums/school improvement organization meetings. Invitational meetings are held in each state. A broad representation of individuals concerned with education are invited to review and validate the LEA survey findings and discuss their implications for action. These forums serve to both delineate existing needs and draw to the surface emergent issues. As part of this public forum, meetings are also held with key school improvement organizations within the state to draw implications for their work in partnership with NWREL.

NWREL Board deliberations. Consistent with program policy, the NWREL Board of Directors as a whole and the Strategic Planning Committee of the Board, in particular, review and comment upon the preliminary findings of the annual regional needs assessment. The purpose of this review is to draw implications for NWREL's work, as well as setting the mission and strategic objectives for the institution.

FINDINGS FROM THE 1998 REGIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT DATA SOURCES

As part of the Year I needs assessment cycle, data from the PARS follow-up surveys, LEA survey write-ins, articles on education from regional newspapers, and input from NWREL senior staff were analyzed to identify emerging issues and trends in public education in the region. The information distilled from this analysis has been combined with results from the 1997 Regional Needs Assessment to develop a list of issues and trends that help define the context and direction of public education in the Northwest. These issues and trends will be incorporated into survey instruments which will be administered to practitioners and the public in 1999. The survey will enable NWREL to determine which issues and trends are impacting the work of educators in the Northwest most heavily. This information can help NWREL define the educational needs of the region and thereby guide its strategic planning process. The following sections detail the results from the analysis of Year I data sources.

PARS Follow-up Surveys

A PARS follow-up survey is sent to each client following the completion of a product or service. In FY98, the responses to the PARS Follow-up Survey question, "What issues affecting schools do you believe NWREL should address in the future?" focused most heavily on curriculum, instruction, and equity issues. In many cases the issues cited reflect practitioners' desire to adjust their practices to an increasingly diverse student population and to state standards for student performance. Practitioners requested assistance with evaluating improvement options, as well as evaluating progress toward improvement. Issues related to professional development included training in equity issues, developing leadership in staff, and recruiting and retaining quality staff. Practitioners also requested assistance with strategies to involve parents and the community in helping all children meet high standards.

The issue of educational alternatives also came up in the follow-up surveys. Practitioners want effective alternatives for children who are not succeeding in their current educational programs, and they want to know if charter schools are succeeding in improving student performance. (See Appendix A for a more detailed summary of the findings.)

LEA Survey Write-ins

In Year II of the needs assessment cycle, a survey concerning regional needs in education is administered to a representative sample made up of teachers, principals, superintendents and school board chairs. In one section of the survey form, practitioners are given the opportunity to write in additional items if they feel an important issue was not covered, or not covered adequately by the survey items. In the 1997 LEA survey, many of the write-ins reflected practitioner frustration with what they regard as increasing demands on educators, coupled with decreasing financial and moral support. Creating a school climate that is supportive to both

students and the teaching and administrative staff was high on the list of issues in the write-ins. Practitioners see high expectations as very important, and believe that meeting these expectations is not just a responsibility of the school. Practitioners suggested a need for establishing greater clarity in the roles and responsibilities of schools, students, parents, and communities in ensuring that students meet high standards. And, they want to find ways to encourage and prepare all parties to take part in this learning partnership. Involving families in supporting student performance was especially stressed.

Professional development issues also surfaced frequently in the write-ins and reflected practitioner frustration with having to deal with situations for which they felt they were not trained or prepared. Practitioners want to learn strategies for dealing with diverse learner needs and abilities in the classroom, including strategies that will make inclusion work for all students, challenge gifted children, and address the needs of limited English proficient students. Assistance with developing strategies to evaluate teacher and administrator performance and improve or terminate the low performing was requested. Strategies to support families in early childhood learning and ensuring their children's readiness to learn are wanted.

The issue of educational alternatives also came up in the LEA write-ins. Practitioners want to learn about effective alternatives for children who are not succeeding in their current educational programs, and they want information on implementing charter schools. (See Appendix B for a more detailed summary of the findings.)

News Clips

News articles from regional newspapers provide an indication of what is on the public's mind regarding education. The types of issues highlighted in news articles focused most heavily on funding issues, especially schools' responses to funding reductions. Standards, and the problems schools are encountering in implementing standards, were also frequently reported, especially what to do about students who cannot meet performance standards. The controversy surrounding curriculum and instructional practices became clear in articles about the phonics and back-to-basics movements. Developing strategies and information resources to ensure that research-based decision making is used in the policy arena seems in order here. (See Appendix C for a more detailed summary of the findings.)

NWREL Senior Staff Recommendations

Each year NWREL's senior program staff convene to review findings from the most recent regional needs assessment activities, and to identify emerging trends and issues based on the needs assessment findings, their experience in the field, and current educational research. The findings from this review are used to help define what the region's educational needs are, and to begin planning the focus of NWREL's activities for the coming year.

During the FY98 meeting, a broad array of issues related to school improvement were identified as areas of growing need. Examples include school climate, performance assessment, school-family and school-community relationships, limited English proficient students, curriculum reform, and integration of technology into teaching and learning. Throughout the discussions of these issues and others, an underlying theme, common to all the issues, surfaced repeatedly - the need to enhance the skills and knowledge of school staff, administrators and community members to plan, implement and evaluate school improvements. NWREL's senior staff agreed that a focus on professional development must begin early in the improvement process, must be comprehensive, and must be on-going in order to ensure wise choices and the successful implementation of school improvements.

Common Themes from the Needs Assessment

A number of themes are common to the four data sources that were used in this analysis. The most prominent was the issue of professional development. This is not surprising given the rapidly changing demands on public educators brought about by an increasingly diverse regional population, the need for new types of knowledge and skills in response to a changing economy, and unparalleled advances in learning theory and teaching technology. In order to teach an increasingly diverse student population new skills and knowledge, using new and rapidly changing technologies, practitioners must continuously update and expand their own skills and knowledge. The LEA survey write-in responses indicate that they are willing to take on the challenges that a changing educational environment imposes. However, they need on-going assistance to develop the skills, knowledge and alliances needed to address these challenges.

A second theme common to all the data sources was the issue of family and community support for student learning. Schools cannot do it alone; support and resources from the entire community are needed to ensure that all children become productive community members. The data suggest that educators need assistance in defining roles and developing strategies to involve families and the community in constructive and meaningful ways in setting high standards for students and in ensuring that students meet these standards. Solid research, presented in words the public can understand, is needed to help school communities make research-based decisions on school improvements, and to evaluate the success of the improvements they are implementing.

One other area of concern highlighted in the data sources, especially the news clips, is what about the students who are not meeting the new performance standards? Is it realistic to expect all students to meet the standards? Should schools develop alternative educational programs to address different student needs? How can schools develop instructional strategies and classroom settings that address the varied learning styles and interests of students?

The final major issue that appeared in all the data sources was the issue of school climate. Practitioners and the public agreed that creating a learning environment that is safe, supportive and productive for all students is a priority. Schools need help in defining what this climate looks like, what roles schools, students, families, and the community must play in making this happen, and how to make it happen.

PROPOSED TRENDS AND ISSUES FOR1998

The following items reflect a distillation of the 1997 LEA Survey items with findings from the PARS Follow-up Survey, 1997 LEA Write-ins, news articles from regional newspapers, and input from NWREL senior staff.

- Italics represent new wording or new items
- Strikethroughs represent deletions from the 1997 Current Issues survey
- Substitutions or deletions for 1997 Trends and Current Issue items are indicated in parentheses

Improving the Outcomes of Schooling

(Issues in this section and the next substitute for the Trend: "Renewed focus on curriculum and instruction, on how students learn, and what they know and can do.")

1. Facilitating transitions as students move through levels of schooling
2. ~~Strengthening~~ *Developing* instructional strategies to actively engage all students in learning
3. Using technology to support learning
4. Implementing developmentally appropriate instruction
5. Developing and implementing a process for renewing the curriculum
6. Increasing curriculum integration
7. Developing student performance and curriculum standards that prepare students to anticipate and meet the challenges of the future

Improving Assessment, Evaluation, and the Data-Based Decisionmaking

(The following items substitute for the Trend: "Increasing emphasis on standards and accountability.")

8. Using data to inform and support educational decision making
9. Increasing support for teachers as researchers and the use of classroom research results
10. Evaluating the effectiveness of reform efforts
11. Aligning assessment with curriculum and instruction
12. Developing classroom assessments that support good teaching
13. Developing alternative assessments that are performance-based and authentic
14. *Developing assessment strategies that are responsive to cultural and learning differences*

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Ensuring Educational Equity

(The following items substitute for the Trend: "Increasing enrollments and concentrations of poor, minority, and special needs students," and the Trend: "Persistent barriers to integration, equity, and high achievement for all students.")

15. Preparing schools and teachers to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population
16. *Finding effective strategies to address the needs of kids who are not succeeding in school*
17. Ensuring all students appropriate and sufficient opportunity to learn to high standards
18. Assuring curriculum, instruction *and assessment* that are culturally, ethnically, and gender inclusive
19. Addressing the needs of limited-English proficient students
20. Facilitating the successful inclusion of special needs students in the classroom

Strengthening the School-To-Work Transition

21. Encouraging a systemic approach from elementary through post-secondary school in preparing students for the school-to-work transition
22. Supporting collaboration among employers, labor, education *to enhance student learning*
23. Enhancing students' technology skills and their awareness of the role of technology in the world of work
24. Creating credentials that document student performance in meaningful ways for employers and for education and training institutions'

Enhancing the Education Profession

25. Ensuring that teacher preparation *reflects student performance standards* ~~best practice in the schools~~
26. *Aligning professional development plans with the school's performance goals.*
27. Improving recruitment and retainment of *qualified staff* ~~quality teaching staff~~
28. Ensuring diversity in the education profession, from teacher preparation through hiring and retention practices in schools
29. Providing time and development opportunities for practitioners to enhance knowledge and skills
30. Expanding teachers' use of technology for improved instruction, communication and professional development

31. Supporting collaborative models of staff development driven by teacher input

32. Preparing teachers to develop community-based learning experiences for students through community partnerships

33. *Evaluating the effectiveness of professional development efforts*

Supporting Children and Families

34. Assuring participation of all parents and segments of the community in the school improvement processes

35. Strengthening partnerships between families and schools to meet the total needs of children

36. Increasing the integrated use of school, community, and private resources to meet the total needs of students (Substitutes for Trend: Increasing integration of services to support children)

37. *Supporting readiness-to-learn efforts for young children from infancy to school-age.* (Replace CI: Expanding early childhood care and education for all children, starting at birth; and CI Improving the transitions from early childhood to elementary school)

38. Increasing family support programs that provide adult basic education, parenting education and access to needed services

39. *Gaining clarity on the roles and responsibilities for school, family and community members in ensuring that all students can meet challenging standards.*

Developing Healthy Schools and Communities

40. *Creating a learning environment that is safe, supportive and productive for all students* (Replace CI: Providing a caring and supportive environment for all students)

41. Fostering positive student behavior, motivation, and self-esteem

42. Preventing incidents of violence on and around school campuses

43. Implementing effective substance abuse prevention strategies
~~Bringing school and community members together to improve student learning~~ (This is covered by the next two items)

44. Strengthening local community understanding and support of school improvement efforts

45. Strengthening skills of educators, families and community members to collaborate on restructuring and reform (Substitutes for trend: Changing role for individual school communities in decisionmaking)

46. Developing the capacity in communities to meet their own needs

Supporting the Educational Enterprise

47. Helping the public understand school finance and its impact on school performance (Substitutes for Trend: "Declining resources force competition for public schools.")

48. Assuring equitable and adequate school funding

49. *Planning and managing in an environment of unpredictable funding and changing governance structures* (Substitutes for Trend: Increasingly unstable and unpredictable structures for decisionmaking and resource allocation; and CI: Stabilizing school funding and Trend: "Increasing state involvement in local improvement decisions and efforts.")

50. *Identifying educational practices that are affordable as well as effective*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES IN THE 1999 REGIONAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

1. In previous years, two different survey instruments were administered to a split sample of practitioners, one covering current issues, i.e., issues practitioners typically deal with on a day-to-day basis, the other survey covering broad emerging trends that could potentially impact education in the region. Practitioners were asked to rate how significant these current issues or emerging trends were to their work. For the 1999 survey year, it is recommended that the items for the two surveys be combined into one survey form and administered to a random sample of practitioners.

   Rationale: Administering two different surveys is costly, time-consuming, and offers questionable benefit for the regional needs analysis. Because the two surveys are administered to two different survey samples, the ability to do crosstab analyses of responses between the two surveys is not possible. In addition, administering two different surveys to two different samples requires a total sample approximately 50 percent larger than the size needed if only one survey was used. The issues covered in the past emerging trends survey can be collapsed into the current issues survey, substituting current issue statements that reflect the level of practitioner concern about issues related to emerging trends. For example, the trend, "Increasingly unstable and unpredictable structures for decision making and resource allocation," can be replaced with the current issue statement, "Planning and managing in an environment of unpredictable funding and changing governance structures." The two surveys could be combined without increasing the number of items a respondent must answer by more than 10 percent.

2. Administer the survey to deans in schools of education as well as K-12 practitioners. Rewrite the survey instructions to say, "Please circle the most appropriate response to 'how significant is this issue to K-12 schools in the region.'"

   Rationale: Teacher and administrator quality is an increasingly important focus of educational reform. The region's schools of education play a primary role in developing quality practitioners. By establishing where the common understandings and disagreements are between what K-12 practitioners' concerns and needs are in their work and what teacher trainers think their needs and concerns are, NWREL can help strengthen the alignment between teacher training and professional development and the needs of practitioners in the field.

3. Administer the survey to the leaders of educational advocacy and policymaking groups, as well as K-12 practitioners. Rewrite the survey instructions to say, "Please circle the most appropriate response to 'how significant is this issue to K-12 schools in the region.'"

Rationale: SIO (school improvement organization) leaders, in addition to educational practitioners, are very important to school improvement efforts. These are the professionals from approximately 47 policy and advocacy organizations in the region that influence educational policy making at the state, national, and oftentimes local levels. Included in these groups are the administrators associations, AACTE liaisons, business and industry representatives, the governors' aides, the school board associations, the state boards of education, the state superintendents, state reform managers, teachers associations and the Region X Office of the DOE. By surveying the leaders from these groups NWREL can gain greater perspective on three valuable pieces of information 1) what issues the people who influence and develop educational policy feel are most important to public education, 2) how well matched the perspective of policymakers is with practitioners' stated needs and 3) the direction educational policy making is likely to take in the future.

Appendix A – PARS Follow-up Survey Responses
(N=212)

Issues clients say NWREL should address:

Instructional strategies

- Addressing diverse learner needs and abilities in the classroom
- Using technology to enhance teaching and learning
- Implementing standards-based instruction – how do we ensure all children meet the standards?
- Identifying proven practices (interdisciplinary, thematic instruction;)
- Incorporating new theories of learning (multiple intelligences, contextual learning)

Curriculum

- Identifying the teachable essentials
- Evaluating curriculum options
- Developing/finding rubrics for all curriculum areas
- Integrating technology throughout curriculum
- Developing a curriculum that addresses state standards

Equity issues

- Meeting the needs of LEP students – usable models and strategies for classroom teachers
- The impact of grouping (gender, ethnic, ability) on learning
- Thinking about equity in our schools
- Making inclusion work for all students
- Incorporating extended learning opportunities for gifted
- Recruiting and retaining a diverse teaching force

Using data for decisionmaking

- Using assessment as a research tool to inform instructional practice
- Implementing action research – reflective change
- Using research to develop school improvement plans

Evaluating school reform (choosing indicators)
Alternative education

- Developing effective alternatives (schools or programs) for students who aren't succeeding now
- Determining if charter schools improve student learning
- Developing effective summer school programs

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School climate

- Fostering high expectations
- Celebrating diversity – fostering tolerance
- Preventing harassment and violence

Professional development

- Preparing teachers to address reforms
- Leadership training – roles
- Professional development for teachers in remote areas
- Equity issues and multicultural education
- Recruiting and retaining quality teachers

School restructuring

- What strategies does the research support to improve student learning

Assessment

- Developing performance standards – equity considerations
- Alternative assessment
- Evaluating school administration

Parent/community involvement

- Increasing involvement to improve student learning
- Empowering parents

Early childhood

- Benefits of prevention and early intervention for schools

School to work

- Thinking through the issue of equity in school-to-work efforts
- Tutoring/mentoring and community involvement
- Identifying school-to-work strategies that can enhance alternative school/youth programs

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Appendix B – LEA Survey Write-ins
(N=321)

Write-in issues educators ranked highest:

School climate

- Maintaining staff morale and motivation when: parents don't parent, legislators mandate but don't fund, the media emphasizes the negative, the public doesn't respect or show confidence in educators, educators are blamed for conditions beyond their control
- Establishing high expectations for students
- Getting students to take responsibility for learning
- Discipline-building policy, support, and respect from all parties

Parent involvement

- Teaching parents to parent (all ages)
- Defining parents' roles and responsibilities in student learning
- Developing parent support for high expectations
- Developing meaningful ways for parents/volunteers to participate in schooling
- Dealing with demanding, unreasonable parents
- Developing support systems for families

Equity

- Making inclusion work for all students
- Ensuring all students have access to technology

Professional development

- Learning to handle diverse learner needs and abilities in the classroom (inclusion, LEP, gifted)
- Managing overloaded schedules
- Training to teach for future needs
- Evaluating teacher/administrator performance
- Recruiting and retaining quality teachers and administrators, and weeding out the poor ones

Curriculum

- Winnowing the wheat from the chaff – identifying the essentials to be taught
- Strengthening student writing skills
- Losing the arts in the back to basics movement

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Instructional strategies

- Aligning curriculum, instruction and assessment with standards
- Using technology to enhance teaching and learning
- Addressing diverse learner needs and abilities

Assessment

- Clearly and meaningfully defining, measuring, and communicating student learning gains

Early childhood

- Ensuring readiness
- Teaching parents to be their child's first teacher (0 to 5)

School restructuring

- Accommodating more students in less space without hurting learning
- Looping
- Configuring schools and classrooms (pods, houses, multiage classrooms)

Alternative education

- Implementing charter schools
- Developing effective alternatives (schools or programs) for students who aren't succeeding now

Using data for decisionmaking

- Doing/finding honest, repeatable, translatable education research
- Identifying dysfunctional schools and systems

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Appendix C – News Clips
(N=470)

Issues addressed in news articles from major newspapers in NWREL states:

Funding

- Schools face budget cuts due to tax limitation laws and declining enrollments
- Issue of funding for schools becomes a political football
- Legislators demand better financial planning and management by schools and districts
- Schools consider funding alternatives (school foundations, grants, funding raising)
- Schools consider restructuring to accommodate growing enrollments

School climate

- Schools and press acknowledge/celebrate student and teacher achievements
- School drug and alcohol programs face cuts
- Schools pressured by suits and other legal issues
- School leadership plays large role in public's perception of schools

Standards

- Many students fail to meet performance standards
- Oregon schools face challenges/delays in implementing CIM

Alternative education

- Public demands effective alternatives (schools or programs) for students who aren't succeeding now
- Schools attempt to build a bridge between home schoolers and public schools
- Some legislators and teacher support public charter schools

School reform

- Back to basics supporters (3R's and phonics) press their position in educational reform efforts
- Educational decisionmaking being made high in the bureaucracy, much to teachers' dismay
- Schools seek public input on school improvement plans
- Schools consider restructuring strategies to improve student learning

School personnel issues

- Teachers need more training if reforms are to succeed
- Evaluation of teacher and administrator performance is called for
- Teaching out of major area due to miss-assignment

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Equity

- Debate over bilingual education and immersion continues
- Gender equity and the need for female role models is an issue
- Schools unprepared for rapid growth in Latino enrollment
- Talented and gifted programs often lacking

Parent/community involvement

- Parent involvement in schools is encouraged
- Intel VP says education is company's number one public policy issue

Early childhood issues

- Preschool and Head Start operate within existing schools
- District ends sponsorship of preschool to make room for regular students

School to work issues

- Schools place a too-exclusive interest in college prep, tech prep needs support
- Service learning is an important component of education in many schools

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